GEOFF JOHNS RICHARD DONNER ADAM KUBERT

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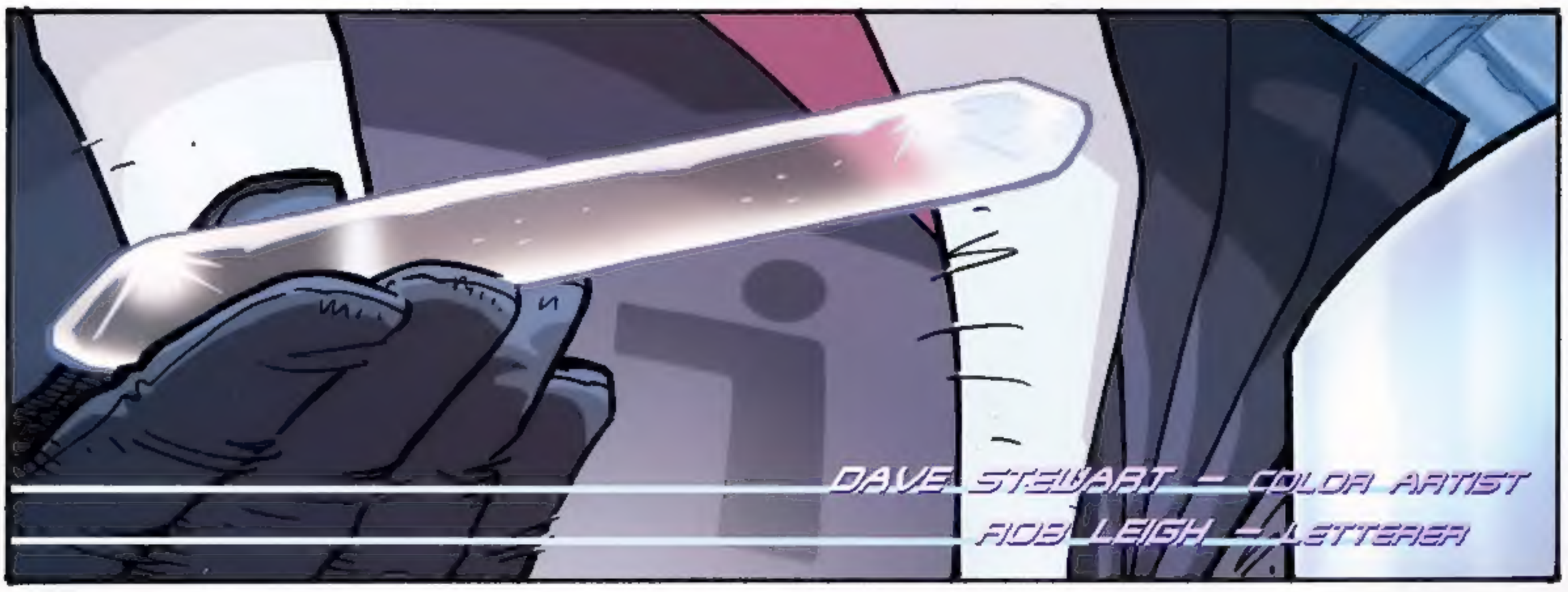
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SUPERMAN CREATED BY
JERRY SIEGEL AND JOE SHUSTER

HELLO, MY SON.

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT, GENERAL ZOD?

THIS SIMULATION OF JOR-EL ACTUALLY THINKS WE ARE *KAL-EL.*

THIS ENTIRE FORTRESS HAS BEEN PROGRAMMED TO ALLOW A KRYPTONIAN COMPLETE ACCESS, URSA.

BECAUSE JOR-EL THOUGHT HIS *SON* WOULD BE THE *LAST* OF US.

ALONG WITH "SUPERGIRL." AND WHEN THE FINAL PHASE OF YOUR WAR PLANS BEGINS, WE WILL DEAL WITH KAL-EL'S COUSIN.

HARSHLY.

THESE SUNSTONE CRYSTALS ARE THE ONLY REMAINING SOURCE OF KRYPTON'S HISTORY.

LET US SEE WHAT THIS HISTORY SAYS ABOUT *ME.*

"FATHER."

YES, MY SON?

TELL ME ABOUT *GENERAL ZOD.*

LAST SON PART THREE

ROCKETED TO EARTH FROM THE DOOMED PLANET KRYPTON, THE BABY KAL-EL WAS FOUND AND RAISED BY JONATHAN AND MARTHA KENT IN SMALLVILLE, KANSAS. NOW AN ADULT, CLARK KENT FIGHTS FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE & THE AMERICAN WAY AS...

SUPERMAN

TO TELL YOU THE STORY OF GENERAL ZOD IS TO TELL YOU OF THE TRAGEDY THAT PRECEDED KRYPTON'S OWN.

DECADES PRIOR TO KRYPTON'S DESTRUCTION, I DISCOVERED AN EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL VOID CALLED THE PHANTOM ZONE. WITHIN THIS EMPTY, ENDLESS PLACE, TIME ESSENTIALLY STOOD STILL.

ONCE INSIDE THE PHANTOM ZONE, ONE'S LIFE WOULD BECOME THAT OF A LIVING GHOST. THEY WOULD NEVER GROW OLD OR HUNGRY.

THEY WOULD NEVER DIE.

THE FIRST PRISONER BANISHED TO THE PHANTOM ZONE WAS A SCIENTIST I ONCE ADMIRED NAMED JAX-UR. DURING AN UNSANCTIONED ATTEMPT TO CONQUER INTERSTELLAR SPACE TRAVEL, JAX-UR DESTROYED KRYPTON'S MOON.

THOUSANDS OF LIVES WERE LOST WHEN THE LUNAR COLONY OF KANDOR VANISHED IN THE EXPLOSION.

THE COUNCIL BELIEVED IT WAS INCINERATED IN THE BLAST, BUT KANDOR CITY'S TRUE FATE MAY NEVER BE KNOWN.

OVER THE YEARS, THOSE WHO THREATENED THE LIVES OF THE MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF THE PLANET KRYPTON WERE JUDGED AND, IF FOUND GUILTY BY THE COUNCIL, SENTENCED TO THE PHANTOM ZONE.

QUEX-UL. ONCE A BRILLIANT SURGEON KNOWN FOR HEALING THE SICK, LATER IMPLICATED IN NUMEROUS ACTS OF MAD EXPERIMENTATION AND TORTURE.

TOR-AN. A SEDUCTIVE KILLER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATHS OF DOZENS OF WOMEN ACROSS KRYPTON AND THE YOUNGEST TO BE SENT INTO THE PHANTOM ZONE.

NADIRA VA-DIM AND ***AZ-REL.*** TWO LOVERS WHO CARRIED OUT A SENSELESS RAMPAGE THAT STAINED OUR CITIES WITH BLOOD, TERROR AND SORROW.

AND ***GENERAL ZOD.***

ONCE HEAD OF THE MILITARY DEFENSE OF KRYPTON, ZOD BECAME THE LEADER OF A BRUTAL ATTACK ON THE COUNCIL THAT LEFT SEVERAL DEAD.

HE WAS FOUND GUILTY OF MURDER AND HIGH TREASON, ALONG WITH HIS LIEUTENANT, ***URSA,*** AND SADLY, MY FORMER MENTOR AND FRIEND, ***NON.***

THE COUNCIL PLANNED TO EXECUTE THE THREE OF THEM UNLESS I AGREED TO REMAIN SILENT ABOUT KRYPTON'S IMPENDING DOOM...AND ACT AS THEIR ***JAILER*** MYSELF.

IT WAS A DUTY I RELUCTANTLY ACCEPTED. AND PERFORMED.

BECAUSE LIFE IS SO VERY PRECIOUS, KAL-EL.

EVEN THE LIFE OF A CRIMINAL.

YOU *DARE* CALL *US* CRIMINALS, JOR-EL?!

WE COULD HAVE *SAVED* KRYPTON TOGETHER, BUT YOU REFUSED TO JOIN US.

INSTEAD YOU ONLY SEALED YOUR OWN FATE, EARTH'S FATE *AND* YOUR SON'S.

...WHAT A STRANGE *HOME* KAL-EL HAS CREATED.

THERE ARE MONUMENTS TO HIS PARENTS. REPLICAS OF EARTH PEOPLE.

AND AN INTERPLANETARY HABITAT OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL CREATURES ON THE VERGE OF EXTINCTION.

THE PHANTOM ZONE VIEWER AND PROJECTOR. AFTER ALL THESE YEARS WE GAZE UPON IT FROM THE *OUTSIDE*.

I CAN ALMOST HEAR MON-EL CRYING OUT AS HE FLIES ON THE EDGE OF SANITY.

Rr.

THE GUILT OF THEIR FATE AND THE PLANET KRYPTON'S WEIGHS HEAVILY UPON ME.

AS DOES THE SIMPLE FACT THAT I AM NOT THERE TO GUIDE YOU MYSELF, KAL-EL.

"SUPERMAN" APPEARS TO BE *QUITE* SENTIMENTAL.

LIKE HIS FATHER. IT WILL BE KAL-EL'S UNDOING.

SECONDS FROM DEATH, FOREVER TRAPPED IN THAT WRETCHED VOID.

I WILL NOT LISTEN TO YOUR FICTITIOUS *HISTORY* ANY LONGER, JOR-EL.

YOU *KNOW* WHAT THE COUNCIL DID TO *NON*.

KKKZZZAAT

DO YOU SEE THIS, GENERAL?

BEYOND THE SUNSTONE CRYSTALS...

THAT WRETCHED VOID, MY DEAR URSA, HOLDS THE *KEY* TO OUR FUTURE.

AS DOES OUR *SON*.

SO WE HAVE OUR STORIES STRAIGHT?

I THINK SO...

...HIS NAME IS CHRISTOPHER.

HE'S TWELVE YEARS OLD.

HE'S FROM NEW YORK CITY.

AND HE'S MY COUSIN'S SON.

I THOUGHT HE WAS *MY* COUSIN'S SON.

WHERE ARE THOSE PAPERS? BATMAN HAD IT ALL FIGURED OUT.

WHO'S BATMAN?

SOMEONE YOU'RE NOT MEETING UNTIL YOU'RE SIXTEEN.

NO ONE'S BETTER AT CLANDESTINE PAPERWORK THAN BATMAN. HE SET WONDER WOMAN UP WITH A SECRET IDENTITY THAT FOOLED THE DEPARTMENT OF METAHUMAN AFFAIRS.

WHO'S WONDER WOMAN?

SOMEONE YOU'RE NOT MEETING UNTIL YOU'RE *EIGHTEEN.*

DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO SAY?

"HI! IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU!"

AND WHAT *ELSE?*

NOTHING!

GREAT.

DINGG!

TWENTY-FIFTH FLOOR. REPORTERS AND KRYPTONIANS.

LOIS, RELAX.

THIS IS GOING TO BE AS *EASY* AS PUTTING ON A PAIR OF *GLASSES.*

...STILL ON THE BOY FROM KRYPTON WHO DISAPPEARED MYSTERIOUSLY AFTER THE MONSTER CALLED BIZARRO TORE APART DOWNTOWN METROPOLIS...

OLSEN?! OLSEN, WHERE THE DEVIL ARE YOU?

...JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA HAS OFFERED THEIR HELP IN THE CONTINUING HUNT FOR THOSE RESPONSIBLE...

...DEPARTMENT OF METAHUMAN AFFAIRS HAS PUT UP A TWO MILLION DOLLAR REWARD FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO THE LOCATION OF THE BOY...

LOMBARD! TROUPE! YOU SEE OLSEN?

NOPE.

SORRY, CHIEF.

HE'S GOT ***TWO SECONDS*** TO PRODUCE ***ONE*** GOOD PICTURE OF ***"SUPER-BABY"*** BEFORE I ***LOSE*** HIS NEXT PAYCHECK.

THIS ***KRYPTONIAN KID*** IS THE ***SINGLE*** MOST IMPORTANT STORY SINCE ***PEANUT BUTTER*** MET ***CHOCOLATE!***

AS EASY AS PUTTING ON A PAIR OF GLASSES, *huh?*

FWASH

HI, LOIS.

HI, MR. KENT.

Um, NEW CAMERA, JIM?

I DROPPED THE OTHER ONE WHEN BIZARRO WAS JUGGLING SCHOOL BUSES. CHIEF'S GONNA HAVE MY ***HEAD*** IF I DON'T TURN UP WITH A PICTURE OF THAT KID...

...HEY.

WHO'S ***THIS?***

HE'S MY COUSIN'S SON.

HI! IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU!

WHAAAT

OW!

GET DOWN!

WATCH OUT!

BETTER HIT THE *SIGNAL-WATCH,* OLSEN.

WANG

ERIC

THIS LOOKS LIKE A JOB FOR...

KLIK

ZEEE ZEEEE

TAKE CHRIS AND GET TO THE STAIRS.

EXIT

ZEEE ZEEE ZEEE ZEEE ZEEE ZEEE ZEE

WHAT IS IT, CLARK? WHAT'S GOING ON?

ZEEE ZEEE ZEEE ZEEE ZEEE ZEEE ZEE

I DON'T KNOW, LOIS.

COCO COLA

ZEEE ZEEE ZEEE ZEEE ZEEE ZEEE ZEE

BUT I'LL PUT A *STOP* TO IT--

CLARK!

THOOM!

THOOM!

THOOM!

MY...MOM BOUGHT ME THIS SUIT.

KKRAKK

Rrr.

AARH!

PTOOOEY!

KKRRRRRNCHH

THOOM!!

HELLO, KAL-EL...

...SUPERMAN...

...OR SHOULD I CALL YOU *CLARK KENT?*

WE HAVE OBTAINED GLIMPSES INTO YOUR LIFE ON THIS PRIMITIVE PLANET FOR DECADES, AND YET I HAVE *NEVER* UNDERSTOOD YOUR MOTIVES FOR SELF-DEGRADATION.

YOUR FATHER WOULD BE *DISGRACED* TO DISCOVER YOU *MASQUERADING* AS ONE OF THESE *SUB-*KRYPTONIANS.

YOU'VE EMBRACED *THEIR* CULTURE AND ABANDONED YOUR *OWN.*

...GENERAL ZOD?

YOU *KNOW* OF ME, KAL-EL?

I'VE STUDIED KRYPTON'S HISTORY. YOU'RE WEARING PRISON UNIFORMS.

YOU AND YOUR *FRIEND* ARE *CRIMINALS* WHO WERE *EXILED* TO THE *PHANTOM ZONE.*

WE ARE *NOT* CRIMINALS.

PUNCH!

GIVE THE CHILD TO ME--

--WOMAN OF KAL-EL.

"WOMAN OF KAL-EL"?

RELEASE MY SON.

31

YOUR... SON?

32 FLOOR

NO! I DON'T WANT TO GO WITH HER.

PLEASE DON'T MAKE ME GO!

YOU BELONG TO US, LOR-ZOD.

AND WE STILL HAVE A USE FOR YOU.

WE ARE *REBELS* WHO HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO *SAVE* KRYPTON, BUT WE WERE *DENIED* BECAUSE OF THE ACTIONS OF *YOUR* FATHER.

I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU *ESCAPED*, BUT AS SOON AS I GET A FEW HITS IN TO REMEMBER ME BY--

CHOP!

--I'M SENDING YOU *BACK.*

LET GO OF MY *SON!*

ZZZZT

ZZZZT

AAAHHH!

THE *FUTURE* OF KRYPTON DOES NOT REST WITH YOU ANY LONGER, KAL-EL.

KRYPTON'S *LAST SON* IS *NOT* JOR-EL'S. KRYPTON'S LAST SON IS *MINE.* AND WITH HIM, EARTH WILL BELONG TO *ME.*

I WILL *TAKE* THIS PLANET AS *YOU* SHOULD HAVE, AND *TRANSFORM* IT INTO *NEW KRYPTON.*

WHAT FRAGILE CREATURES.

fl-
CRACK!

YOU AND WHAT *ARMY,* GENERAL?

SUPERMAN! HELP!

THIS ONE.

KRAKSHH

HELP!

LOOK OUT!

KOOOM!

FREE!

JAX-UR IS FREE!

KOOOM!

KOOOM!

THOOM!

I AM HERE TO DO WHAT YOUR FATHER *COULD* NOT.

I AM HERE TO *SAVE* OUR WORLD.

FAREWELL, KAL-EL.

TO BE CONTINUED

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FOR SPECIAL NEWS, DOWNLOADS, SURPRISES!

So here we are in the home stretch, down to the final ten issues of our monumental weekly series 52. Each of those issues promises a startling revelation and no holds barred action through the series time shattering conclusion. And when 52 ends (yes, it does end), I bet you are wondering what do we do for an encore?

Well, wonder no more, for as 52 ends, let the COUNTDOWN begin.

That's right. COUNTDOWN, the name of our new weekly series ready to start the very next week after 52 #52 and set to come out for the next 51 weeks that follow. Now before I tell you what exactly we are counting down to, let me tell you a little more about the series. Master television and comic book storyteller (and writer of our very own DETECTIVE COMICS) **Paul Dini** will head up an exciting team of writers that will take this new series through every corner of every known and unknown universe. Breakdowns for the art will, once again, be handled by the unflappable **Keith Giffen** (no rest for the weary!), and joining him will be a collection of talented artists both familiar and new to DC Comics. Those are the folks leading the charge, but the real star of the series is the DC Universe itself. In COUNTDOWN DC Comics' full, rich history is explored, and with characters like Jimmy Olsen, Mary Marvel, Donna Troy, Kyle Rayner, Jason Todd and others as our guides, there's a good chance for every hero and villain to take part in this story. Where 52 was a story of a missing year, COUNTDOWN is all about the now and will act as the spine of the DCU for the next year.

So if you were worried about ways to fill your weekly comic habit after 52, relax. COUNTDOWN promises to be there for you week in and week out for the next year and also promises the same level of thrills, twists, action and surprises that 52 delivers.

Oh, and before I forget, what are we counting down to? Well, let me just say.... Oops! Look at the time, gotta go.

More on this soon, promise.

To be continued. DD

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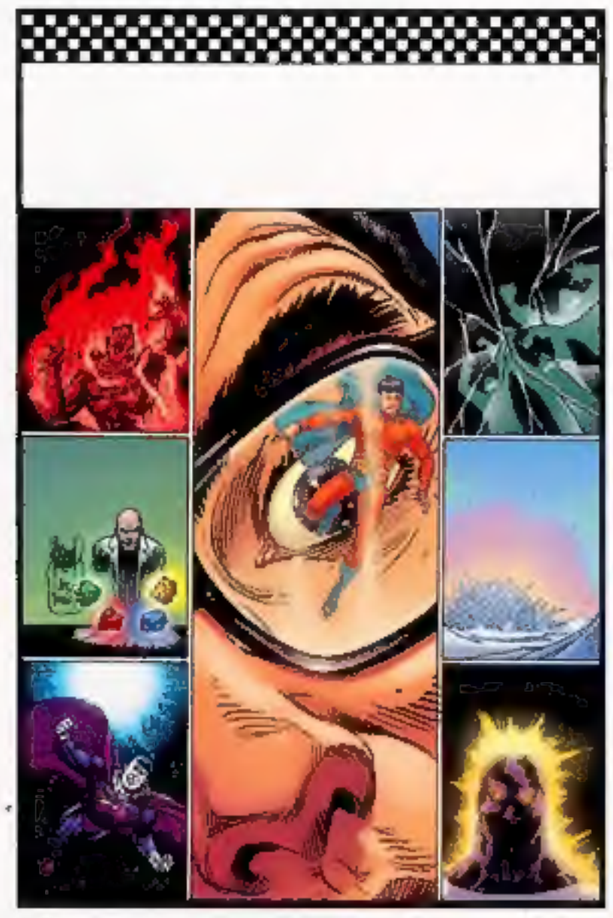

Next in...

ACTION COMICS ANNUAL #10

A peek into the past and near future via Geoff, Richard, and ACTION COMICS ANNUAL #10!

THE HOT LIST THIS WEEK

BLUE BEETLE #12

GREEN LANTERN #17

FIRESTOCK #33

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